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ABSTRACT

This guide attempts to show educators a perspective on Columbus that is historically accurate and sensitive to American Indian history. The 500-year anniversary of the voyage of Columbus is not a time for rejoicing among the Indian population. Although exploration of the New World was inevitable, Columbus and his successors treated the Indian people badly and brought about rapid change that gave the Indian people no alternative to historical events. This guide discusses the misuse of the word "discovery" with regard to Columbus's voyages, the details of the life and voyages of Columbus, and the subsequent glorification and romanticization of his part in history. Common textbook inaccuracies and omissions are examined. Also included are a historical timeline featuring both European/Asian and American Indian developments, instructions for using the timeline, a list of American Indian stereotypes to "unlearn," an explanation of American Indian beliefs about the origins of various tribes, and several classroom activities aimed at the grade 4 level. (SV)

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AN AMERICAN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON COLUMBUS

AN INDIAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM UNIT

BY

ESTHER STUTZMAN

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This volume is kindly dedicated
to our elders
who kept the traditions.

Esther Stutzman

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Developed by:

Coos County Indian Education Coordination Program*
9140 Cape Arago Highway
Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

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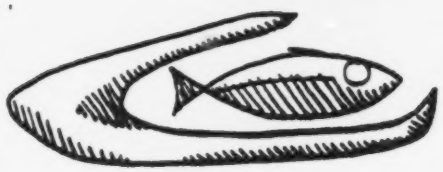


INDIAN EDUCATION

COOS COUNTY INDIAN EDUCATION COORDINATION PROGRAM - JIM THORNTON, COORDINATOR
Jim Thornton, 9140 Cape Arago Highway, Coos Bay, OR 97420 / Phone (503) 888-4584

The need for comprehensive Indian culture and historical curriculum has existed for generations. Although more recent textbooks have attempted to fill obvious historical gaps, too often American history begins only with Columbus and often presents Indians as barriers to Manifest Destiny. Beginning with the 500-year anniversary of the arrival of Columbus to this hemisphere a wider recognition of that encounter has begun to surface throughout the nation's classrooms. Many teachers recognize the need to provide a more honest view of what actually occurred between the millions of Native people already in the Americas and the arrival of Columbus.

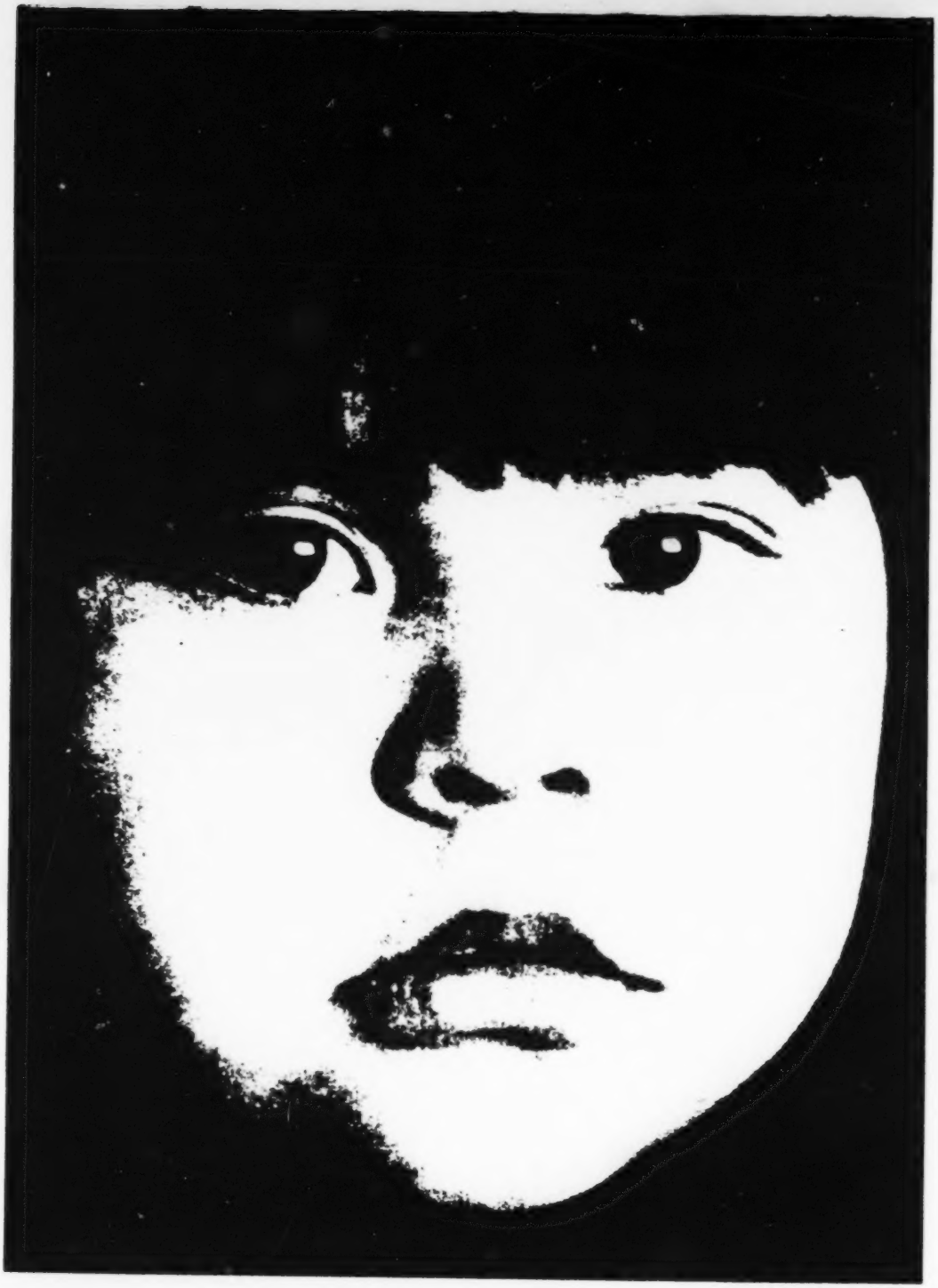
Many interested teachers have attempted to supplement existing curriculum, but accurate sources have been difficult to locate and have often been unadaptable for classroom use. As busy teachers find less and less available time to locate and research historical and anthropological texts for accurate information, the need to produce An Indian Perspective on Columbus became apparent.

This Indian Education curriculum unit, An Indian Perspective on Columbus, was developed to meet the needs of busy teachers. It and the Thanksgiving . . . A Resource Guide and the American Indian Music for the Classroom curriculum units were developed to supplement The American Indian Social Studies Curriculum Activity Guide, (Grades K-6) (Grades 7-8) & (High School), that was developed and then printed in the early 1980s under other funding. The current Columbus unit as well as the Thanksgiving and American Indian Music curriculum units were developed through a cooperative agreement with Coos County Indian Education programs in Bandon, Coos Bay, Coquille, Myrtle Point, North Bend and Powers, Oregon. In addition to the development of innovative curriculum, other services in coordinating local Indian Education programs are available for individual school district Indian Education programs. Coordination services (under various funding sources) have been available for area school districts since 1976.

Esther Stutzman is the author of this Columbus resource guide. She also wrote the Thanksgiving . . . A Resource Guide, the American Indian Music for the Classroom curriculum unit and The American Indian Social Studies Curriculum Activity Guide. Esther has used the present resource guide in Indian resource speaker presentations in local classrooms as well as those in Lake Stevens, Washington, schools. She is an outstanding Indian educator that has been enthusiastically received by teachers, students and parents. Although she and her family currently live near Everett (Washington) now, the current curriculum and others that she has developed provide an outstanding resource for busy teachers wherever they are located.

The material in this guide was developed on a fourth grade level, but teachers of other grades will find that the material can be easily adapted by them for effective use in their classrooms too. As with the development of the other curriculum materials written by Esther, we hope that its use will be both informative for students and teachers . . . as well as FUN!

Jim Thornton
Indian Education Coordinator
Fall 1992



"A LOSS OF ONE CULTURE IS A LOSS TO ALL CULTURES..."

-Chief Edgar Bowen, Coos (1975)

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HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Europe-Asia		American Indian
	PRESENT	
	1900	
Industrial Revolution	1800	Treaties with tribes
	1700	
Europeans come to America		
Napoleon rules France	1600	
		Iroquois League formed
	1500	
Columbus mistakes Caribbean islands for India	1300	
Normans conquer England	1000	
	800	Anasazi of S.W. build high-rise buildings using solar energy
Fall of Rome	500	Hohokam develop extensive system of irrigation in S.W.
	A.D.	
	B.C.	
	500	Agriculture in the S.W. (corn)
		Pottery developed (Mogollon)
Greek civilization develops		
	1000	Burial Mound cultures in Ohio
		Cultures of Oregon coast flourish
Rule of Tutankhamen (Egypt)		
	2000	First pottery developed along Atlantic coast
Stonehenge (England) constructed		
	3000	Arctic cultures develop tool-making techniques
	4000	
	5000	Big game hunting develops on Great Plains
	6000	
Middle East cultures develop	7000	
	15000	Man hunts Ice Age mammals in North America

Stereotypes to "Unlearn"

Many Indian-reference words and phrases exist today in the form of stereotypes. Few of these are flattering to the Indian people. Most are very offensive. Below is given a list of references that will be helpful in presenting an accurate picture of Indian life.

1. "Sit like an Indian"

   All people of all races sit in cross-legged fashion, especially when sitting on the ground. Those culture groups who do not use chairs or benches may assume this position for comfort.

2. Indian "Princess"

   Indian people did not have royalty such as the Europeans have, but instead, had councils of wise people who made decisions. An Indian "Princess" was probably the daughter of one of the tribal leaders. In order to be a "Princess", the father had to be a king. Indians had no kings.

3. War Bonnet

   The people of the Plains primarily used the "war bonnet". It was not just for wars, but for ceremonial purposes also. Only the most honored and respected members of the tribe were allowed to wear such a bonnet and this honor must be earned.

4. War Whoop

   Indian people did not make a "war whoop" as it is commonly done - touching the hand to the mouth and emitting a sound like a siren. The Indian people in battle gave short loud cries in order to unnerve the enemy. The sound was also one of joy such as the modern "Yipee".

5. Squaw

   This word has taken on a bad connotation. Indian people are offended by its use. In the past it has been too often used in a demeaning manner.

6. Buck

   Same as above.

7. Scalping

   The early colonists and settlers paid bounty-hunters for the scalps of Indians. It was a method to eliminate the tribes from land that was wanted for settlement. Before the Europeans came, scalping was not practiced among Indian people, but rather cutting the enemy's hair was common. Later, many tribes used scalping as a means of showing ferocity and retribution.

8. Speak Indian

There is no such language as "Indian". There were approximately 220 distinct and different languages among Indian people (even in Coos County, three dialects existed, unintelligible from each other). Properly, it is stated - "Speak an Indian language".

9. "Ugh"

Only Hollywood Indians use this.

10. The use of "um" after words

Hollywood also invented a broken speech pattern for Indians in which "um" is added to words (ride-um, see-um, like-um). Indian people have never spoken like this.

11. Like "a bunch of wild Indians"

Again, thanks to Hollywood the Indian has been labeled as specifically "wild" and untamed.

12. "How"

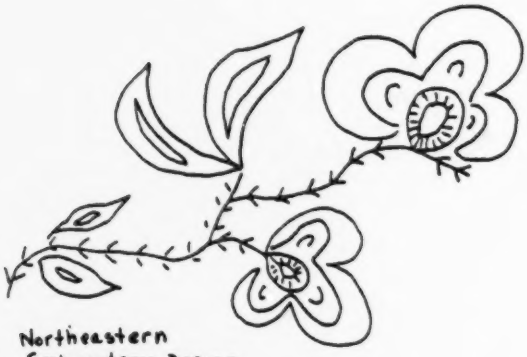
Origin of this is unknown. More properly, perhaps "Kla-how-ya" a Chinook phrase for both hello and good bye.

13. "One little, two little, three little Indians . . ."

This is offensive to most Indian people.

14. "Indian-giver"

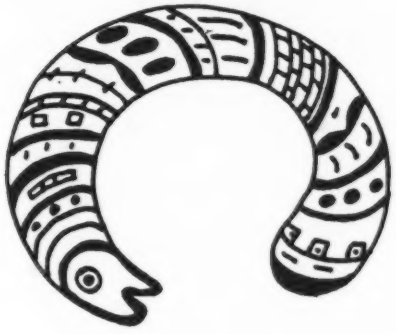
This has always been used to mean a person will take back what has been given. How this phrase came about in unknown, considering the fact that the Indian people historically have not been in a position to "reclaim" what was given away. Use of this phrase is also offensive to Indian people.



Northeastern
Embroidery Design

THE ORIGINS OF THE PEOPLE

The science and history books are full of theories about how Indians got to North America. The most common explanation is that migrating tribes crossed a land bridge from Asia to Alaska between 10,000 and 40,000 B.C. From there, the tribes spread southward, eventually taking up residence in all parts of *the United States*. This is an accepted scientific theory, along with several others that say, for example that Indians may have come here by boat from Asia and adjacent island groups.



ESKIMO IVORY CARVING

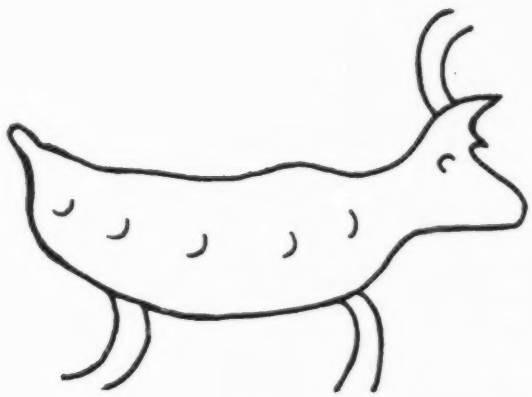
But there's another side to the story... the Indian side.

Nowhere in the histories of Indian people is it found that there was a migration across snowy stretches to a new land. Although the Indian people had no written language, events were preserved by storytelling. Some of the stories are so old that they describe events taking place when North America was inhabited by extinct animals such as the mammoth, mastadon, camel and sloth.

In almost every tribe's oral literature, there are stories of the origins of people. These stories tell how the people originated in their own homeland, using the local landmarks and place names. For example, the Coos Tribe of the Oregon coast have a story about people being created from the sand at the beach near Sunset Bay. The Muskogee tell how the people rose up from "the belly of the earth" in the Rocky mountains and went eastward to Georgia.

And so, when Indian tribes are asked how long they have lived in an area, the answer is:

"FOREVER"



ROCK PAINTING
SASKETCHEWAN

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM GUIDE

In classroom study of Christopher Columbus, activities are often hard to find. Plays, songs and stories about Columbus are the most-used resource. This guide is intended to educate the teacher about that specific time in history. Research abounds during this 500-year anniversary of Columbus' voyages, but few people have the time to wade through tomes of information. This curriculum guide is presented as a short and condensed version of historical research. We hope this will give you an insight into the real story of Columbus so that we can counter the many, many inaccuracies in the textbooks that romanticize the era.

Use the information to augment and correct the textbooks you are currently using. Activity guides follow that can be used in the classroom so that the students can see a fresh approach to the study of Columbus.

INTRODUCTION

A first thought was how easy it would be to write a curriculum unit about Christopher Columbus. It would be an American Indian viewpoint about the 'discovery' and how it impacted the Native people. How easy it would be to vent the frustration of Indian people about historical inaccuracies and hero-worship. What better place to show how the American population has idolized the main character who does not deserve such a place in history.

But . . . a curriculum unit should be a place of teaching, with prejudices put aside and facts stated for their own value. This then, was not an easy unit to write from an American Indian viewpoint. The following is an attempt to show educators a perspective about Columbus that is more acceptable to the sensitivity of Indian history. If the content offends anyone, it is not intended to do so. The intent is to provide historical accuracy in the hope that children will understand that the voyages of Columbus changed the life of American Indians forever.

REGARDING COLUMBUS

An often-published cartoon shows the Indian people standing on the beach watching the arrival of Columbus. The caption reads, "Well, there goes the neighborhood." Another similar cartoon shows the same scene with one Indian saying to the other, "Let's let them stay. What harm can they do?"

Humor has always been a way to uncover the deep-seated truth about people's feelings. There have been many jokes about Columbus being a 'lost sailor' and mistaking the people of the New World for inhabitants of the Indies. But whatever Columbus may have been to the rest of the world, his exploits are seen differently by American Indians.

In this 500-year anniversary of the voyage of Columbus, it is not a time for rejoicing among the Indian population. The viewpoint is that the often-celebrated sailor brought about change that ultimately destroyed Native people. Although exploration of the New World was inevitable, the manner in which Columbus and his successors treated the Indian people is a sad period of history. Change was rapid and gave the Indian people no alternative to historical events. Needless to say, today's Indian population does not join with the rest of America in celebration of Columbus. To some, he was a hero but we need to look at the true history to show how Columbus came to be the specific historical figure that he is.

"DISCOVERY" ??

Webster's dictionary defines 'discovery' as, "the first to find out." Archaeological data shows that the Indian people have been in America for well over 60,000 years. Indian people believe that the tribes have been in America since the beginning of time. That is the true meaning of 'discovery.' In the history books the children read, the word 'discover' is consistently used with the voyages of Columbus. It makes it appear that he was the first human being to arrive in the New World. In fact, many timelines that are posted in classrooms show 1492 A.D. as the beginning of American history. Few timelines show the thousands of years of sophisticated Indian culture that had developed in America before that time.

So, what word do we use instead of 'discovery?' A T-shirt logo says that "Columbus didn't discover America, he invaded it." Perhaps we should look at how Columbus' arrival should be put into words. In the classroom, we should speak of Columbus' 'arrival' or 'landing' in the New World. An emphasis should be placed on the fact that there were many, many cultures in the Americas before Columbus and that his arrival was not a 'discovery' but rather, a voyage to an area that was new to European culture. This will give children an impression and respect for the cultures that had been in America prior to 1492.

WHO WAS COLUMBUS?

Recently, there has been much research into the origins of Columbus, with little result of definite historical facts. Most commonly, it is agreed that he was the son of a weaver, but his birthplace is disputed. Genoa, Corsica and Spain all claim him to be a native son. In addition, his name is in dispute since he changed it to fit the language of the country he lived in. Christopher Columbus is merely the English version of his name taken from a variety of various spellings.

Columbus was not always a sailor and navigator. Earlier, he was a 'jack-of-all trades' for the better portion of his life. He was a bookseller, weaver and tradesman before the lure of navigation. He became proficient at meteorology, navigation and seamanship. As did most tradesmen of the time, he became interested in finding sources of natural riches such as spices and goods from the Orient. At the time, a voyage to the East was long and strenuous and took years. It soon became apparent to Columbus that a different trade route should be possible that would shorten the journey to the East.

Columbus did NOT make his voyages to prove the world was round. Most navigators knew that the curvature of the earth existed. Most scholars of the time acknowledged a round earth but did not know the circumference and were hesitant to agree that a voyage around the world was feasable. Columbus encountered opposition to his 'round-world' theory not because of disbelievers but because people thought it might be impossible to sail around the world in a lifetime. Nowhere is it written that he was daring enough to risk 'falling off the edge of the world,' as is commonly thought in textbooks.

As most tradesmen of the period, Columbus was looking for a way to make profits. His navigational and sailing skills gave him an advantage to persue his business ventures. Many people believe that his motive for exploration was to spread Christianity or simply because he was an adventurer. In reality, his motive was wealth. He had read of the exploits of Marco Polo who brought back riches from the Orient. Columbus' idea was to also tap the riches of the East but at the same time, find a shorter route. This became his idea and obsession for finding a shorter route by sailing WEST instead of east.

Contrary to popular textbook readings, Queen Isabella of Spain did **not** pawn the royal jewels to finance Columbus' expedition. At the time, the Spanish treasury was poor from the many battles with the Moors. Columbus' insistence that Spain finance his venture in order to acquire riches for Spain finally resulted in Isabella's OFFER to pawn the jewels. At last, through financial juggling and loans, Spain managed to finance Columbus' expedition. In return for the riches he hoped to bring back, Columbus insisted on 10 percent of the bounty, not just for his voyages, but for all subsequent exploration because of his pioneering efforts.

THE VOYAGE AND LANDING

Columbus kept very specific logs of his journey but sometime over the years, the original logs were lost. After his return, Columbus re-created his logs, but many errors were made, especially in the navigational area. Because he was not really sure where he landed, he assumed it was in the Orient.

Most historians agree on the fact that Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain with the three ships, the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria. After a month in the Canary Islands repairing the Pinta, Columbus set sail again on September 6th, 1492. On October 12, land was sighted and the voyagers came to land. Another inaccurate historical item we see in textbooks is that Columbus himself was the one who first sighted land. Recent research shows that one of the seamen on the Pinta saw land and shouted, "Tierra" (Land). Since the royalty of Spain promised great riches to the first person to sight land, Columbus paid the seaman a small amount and wrote in his log that he himself was indeed the first to see the New World.

Historians do not agree on the exact landing site of where Columbus landed. Nearly every island in the Bahamas claims to be the first landing place. We do know that Columbus took Native people back to Spain with him. He said that they "...are docile and ought to be good servants." In reality, the people he took with him were treated as slaves and never returned to their homeland.

After Columbus made his second voyage to the Caribbean in 1494, it became clear that he was eager for all the riches the New World could offer. He took 1,500 Arawak Indians captive and filled his ship with 500 of them to be taken to Spain as slaves. Only 300 of the Arawaks survived the voyage and were ultimately put up for sale in Seville, Spain. Columbus urged royal backing for more ventures in slave trade but soon saw it was proving to be unprofitable because of the high death rate.

Still searching for riches, gold in particular, Columbus continued to sail the Caribbean. In one journal entry Columbus writes, "Gold is a wonderful thing. Whoever owns it is lord of all he wants." When he heard rumors of gold in the island province of Cibao, he instituted a system by which the Indians would provide the gold. Each person over the age of 14 was required to bring a certain amount of gold dust to a certain collection spot. When they complied with the required amount, they were given a token to wear

around their neck. If the Spanish found any person without a token, they would cut off the hands or kill them as an example to the others. During the two years under this system, over 1/3 of the Native population of Hispaniola was killed. Conservative estimates count this to be between 125,000 and a half million people.

Columbus made four voyages to the New World. After each voyage and return to Spain, Columbus demanded more and more profits and Admiralty titles. The Spanish treasury, although growing from the plunder in the New World, was not rich enough to give Columbus his ever-increasing percentages. On several occassions Isabella withdrew her original contracts with Columbus because of his insistance on a larger and larger share.

Columbus became a proverbial thorn-in-the-side to the Spanish royalty as well as to his fellow merchants. His boasting and profitering made him a nuisance to the extent that he was ultimately shunned by his peers. In 1506, he died in Valladolid, Spain. Where his remains are buried today is still a mystery since they were moved several times.

THE COLUMBUS LEGACY

To most people, Columbus was a hero who opened up trade and colonization in a new part of the world. He has been romanticized throughout history and his legend has been accentuated by romanticism and pure fiction.

Within the American Indian community, the view of the Columbus anniversary is a grim one. Why idolize a person who exploited Native populations? Why make a hero of a man who took slaves and brought a myriad of diseases to an otherwise peaceful people? It is a question that has been asked of all explorers who changed the face of history. The idea of Manifest Destiny has ruled since the first person made a journey to an unexplored land.

The National Council of Churches has joined with many other groups to call for a rethinking of Columbus. They stated, "A celebration is not an appropriate observance of this anniversary." Some states such as North and South Dakota have chosen to celebrate 'Native American Day' instead of Columbus Day.

/ So, let's re-think Columbus and look at his exploits in a different light. We can't change history, but the important job for educators is to teach about history in an honest way.

Most educators today see that the Columbus myth has been distorted in textbooks, novels and movies. The truth of outright genocide has been ignored to the point that children who read the glorified accounts of 1492 see a glorious conquest. Nowhere in the textbooks do we see the condemnation of the exploitation, racism and inequality. We can no longer stand silent and teach untruths. To do so would tell our young people that the injustices are tolerated for the sake of a few pieces of gold.

TEACHING ABOUT COLUMBUS

LOOK AT THE TEXTBOOKS

1. Using the preceeding text of this unit, look for the myths in textbooks about Columbus such as "Isabella pawned the royal jewels..." or "Columbus sighted land..."

2. Explain how the story of Columbus became romanticized through years of re-writing and other inaccurate books.

3. Be sure that students understand that the American Indian people have a different view of Columbus and why.

4. Use classroom activities that are non-stereotyped toward Indian people. (Some books show Columbus arriving to a land populated by Plains Indians living in tipis!)

5. Show that the cultures in North America were diverse and highly sophisticated in 1492. Too many texts give the impression that Columbus arrived in the middle of a primitive Stone Age culture.

6. Use a timeline that DOES **NOT** begin in 1492 A.D.

USE A CORRECT TIMELINE

In 1492, Columbus arrived in a hemisphere in which:

1. The Hohokam of the Southwest had developed extensive irrigation systems.
2. Anasazi architects built multi-level 'apartment' complexes in the Chaco Canyon of the Southwest.
3. The Kiowa and other Plains tribes developed seven different and distinct varieties of corn.
4. Agricultural communities along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers used floodlands and dikes to enhance the harvest.
5. The Moundbuilders of Illinois constructed a pyramid one-hundred feet high and with a 17-acre base.
6. The Iroquois Confederacy of the east coast had developed into one of the most complex political units of the time. (In fact, a portion of the U.S. Constitution was based directly on Iroquois political structure.)
7. The Makah Indians of Washington state used large carved cedar canoes to hunt whales, harpooning them with 18-foot harpoons. (Many other west coast cultures were canoe-makers, often making the canoes to hold 40 people.)
8. Over six hundred varieties of houses were used, depending on the environment. (Early pioneers copied many of the house styles such as the dugout and adobe.)

Pretend you are a sailor on the Santa Maria. Write home about what you did by filling in the blanks.

Dear _____,

The voyage took _____ days. The part I liked the best was _____ _____.

When we first saw land, I thought it looked _____. There were many _____ on the beach.

The people who live there are _____. They have many _____ in their village.

I must stop now because I have to _____.

Signed, _____

Unscramble the letters to make words.

1. We really do not know where Columbus WAS RONB _____.

2. He had three ships, the ANIN _____, the NAPIT _____ and the NTAAS RAIMA _____ _____.

3. He asked the Queen of NPSAI _____ for money to explore.

4. He wanted to find a shorter route to the East IDNISE _____.

5. Columbus saw people when he landed and called them SNINIAD _____.

6. Columbus landed on an NASIDL _____ in the Caribbean.

7. He thought he could get to the SETA _____ by sailing SETW _____.

8. Columbus made VELASS _____ of the native people and took them back to Spain.

You are a writer for a newspaper. Write down what might have been the first conversation between Columbus and the natives. (We can pretend that both speak English.)

Columbus:"

Natives:"

Columbus:"

Natives:"

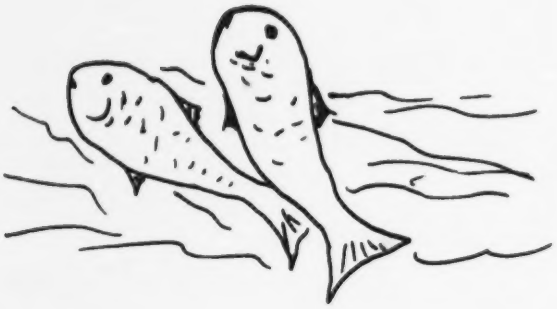
Use the space below to make words from

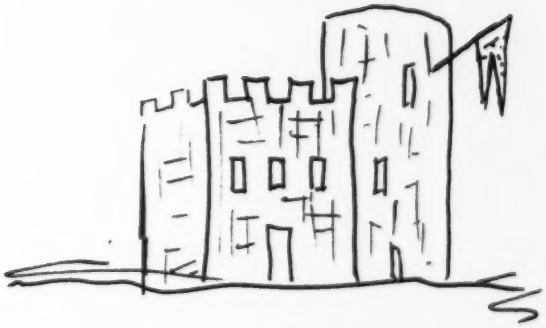
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

(Example: 'STOP')

You can mix up the letters also. (Example: 'SUM')

Circle the things Columbus might have found in the New World





True or False?

1. Columbus discovered America. T F
2. Columbus landed in New York. T F
3. Queen Isabella of Spain sold her jewels to give money to Columbus. T F
4. Columbus made friends with the Cherokee Indian tribe. T F
5. Columbus' ships were the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. T F
6. Columbus took Indian slaves back to Spain. T F
7. Columbus saw land first. T F
8. The voyage took 3 years. T F
9. Most people in those days thought the earth was flat. T F
10. Indians lived in America for thousands of years before Columbus came. T F